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AUTHOR Peterson, Jane
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ABSTRACT

The second in a series of manuals designed for instructor/coordinators of Richland College's cooperative education seminars, this volume contains two learning modules focusing on nonverbal communication and business writing. In addition to stating student objectives and listing additional resources, each module introduces basic concepts and principles in an overview for instructors designed to generate student development and individual and group interaction. The nonverbal communication module begins with a review of the types of nonverbal cues and their functions, including information on cues which regulate conversation and those which express emotion. In addition, the module examines the relationship between verbal and nonverbal messages and the relationship between speaker and listener in terms of immediacy, power, and responsiveness. Case histories to be used as examples in lectures or class discussions or as the basis of role-playing or written exercises are included. The business writing module describes effective written communication in business; compares reader-centered and writer-centered writing in terms of content, organization, and style; explains ways to achieve reader-centered writing; and describes the plain language movement. This module contains exercises on avoiding errors that bother executives and on writing memos. (DAB)

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INSTRUCTOR RESOURCE MANUAL

for

COOPERATIVE EDUCATION SEMINARS

BOOK 2

Written
by
Jane Peterson, Ph.D.

Designed and Coordinated
by
James E. Meador, Director
Cooperative Education Programs
Richland College
Dallas County Community College District

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

This series was written by Dr. Jane Peterson. Dr. Peterson has taught at Richland College for ten years. She received her B.A. from Bethel College and the M.A. and Ph.D. from the University of Arkansas.

Dr. Peterson is currently on a one-year sabbatical leave working as an intern with the Document Design Project (DDP) funded through the Teaching and Learning/Reading and Language Group at the National Institute of Education, Washington, D.C.

A GUIDE TO EFFECTIVE SEMINARS

These volumes of seminar materials were produced by professionals in each subject area. They are designed to provide Cooperative Education instructor/coordinators with an adequate supply of information and resource material to conduct seminars that are pertinent and applicable to the students' needs.

Each volume contains materials for lecture notes, exercises, work sheets, illustrations, case studies, and problem solving exercises. The guide provides basic concepts and principles that will generate self-development and individual and group interaction in learning.

Specific Objectives

1. To provide a resource of written material, reference books, and audio visual materials to supplement the instructor's experience.

2. To present the written material in a ready-to use format that requires only the instructor's personalized modification.

3. To provide case studies, exercises, quizzes. and role plays to involve all students in the seminar.

4. To encourage each instructor to develop additional lesson plans from the ideas and ample information contained in the guides.

****

YOU can add vitality and interest to your seminars by applying these few suggestions.

*First, help each student build confidence and create a desirable attitude toward Co-op as well as their job.

*Identify the students' abilities as well as their needs and challenge them; keep them coming back for more.

*Conduct the seminar to include all the members of the group; make it easy for everyone to participate.

*Use varied methods to present the materials; lectures, problem analysis, case studies, guest speakers, debates, and panel discussions are a few methods that may be utilized.

*Develop your own individual style; conduct the seminars in a way that is comfortable for you.

*Pace your seminars to maintain the students' interest; timing is learned with experience.

Remember, with your own special teaching abilities and a little pre-planning, you will be able to conduct excellent seminars.

NONVERBAL COMMUNCIATION

I. OBJECTIVES: The student will be able to

A. explain what is meant by the statement, "you can't not communicate"

B. list the four basic functions that nonverbal messages can serve

C. define the term "double message" and cite an example of a "double message"

D. list five basic types of nonverbal cues

E. explain what is meant by looking for "clusters" of cues

F. describe at least two ways clusters be used to interpret the relationship between speaker and listener

II. MODULE MATERIALS

A. Instructor's Review of Topic

B. Case Histories

C. Student Summary Sheet: Nonverbal Communication

D. Application

III. OTHER RESOURCES

A. Communication: The Nonverbal Agenda, a 30 minute, 16 mm. color film. This film introduces the different types of cues and refers to reading cues in clusters for immediacy, power, etc. It alternates presenting work scenes (sometimes with a voice-over and sometimes not) with introducing and discussing concepts.

B. Eakins, Barbara W. and R. Gene Eakins. Sex Differences in Human Communication. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1978. This very readable book focuses on nonverbal behavior and includes descriptions between men and women. It is neither a "pop psychology" work nor a feminist treatise. The authors' concern is that people understand sex differences so that they do not misinterpret what they see when looking for clusters of cues.

C. Frank, Allen D. "Observing and Interpreting Nonverbal Cues," in Communicating on the Job. Glenville, Ill.: Scott Foresman and Co., 1982, pp. 100-134. This chapter provides a thorough but concise introduction to nonverbal behavior and includes some information (seating patterns, class codes, etc.) not covered in the instructor's review for this module.

D. Knapp, Mark L. Nonverbal Communication in Human Interaction, 2nd ed. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1978. This standard work is an invaluable reference on nonverbal behavior that reveals its importance in communication.

E. Weitz, S., ed. Nonverbal Communication: Readings with Commentary. New York: Oxford University Press, 1974. This book provides another good reference on different aspects of nonverbal behavior.

NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION: A Review for Instructors

Popularizers of nonverbal communication have created more problems than they have solved. Most popular books on the topic imply that body position or "body language" is the heart of nonverbal communication and that each position or signal has one meaning, too often a sexual one. Such popular ideas oversimplify what is really a complex, culturally-determined system and undermine the important functions of nonverbal communication.

Nonverbal communication involves more than "body language"; it includes facial expressions, vocal cues, spatial cues, object cues, time cues--everything except the spoken word. That businesses consider nonverbal communication important is revealed in many ways. For example, many companies hire "corporate image consultants" to select wardrobes for key executives, establish dress codes, or design uniforms; others hire marketing research specialists to study the affect of color and type of paper on the response to a sales letter; and virtually every firm hires interior designers to decorate offices, reception rooms, conference rooms, and other places open to customers and visitors. In other words, companies know that appearances "speak" and that the unspoken message can work for or against the firm's goals.

TYPES OF NONVERBAL CUES AND THEIR FUNCTIONS

Just as nonverbal cues, like appearance, can affect a potential customer's response to a company, so various nonverbal cues can affect one individual's response to another. Most communications experts identify several types of nonverbal cues. These types are universal, but the interpretation of specific cues within categories varies by culture:[1]

(1) vocal cues: pitch, tone, rate of speech, non-word sounds (sighs, throat clearing), pauses in speech, all cues produced by the human voice except words

(2) body cues: gestures, facial expressions (smiles, scowls), posture, eye contact, body position, and any non-vocal cues produced directly by the body

(3) space cues: use of space (office size and seating arrangement) and interpersonal distance (in American culture, 0-18" = intimate; 18"-4' = personal; 4'-12' = social; over 12' = public)

(4) object cues: all cues produced by owning, carrying, or handling objects (clothing, jewelry, title and name plate, desk accessories, etc.)

(5) time cues: punctuality, time consciousness, being available only by appointment, looking at watch, or any cue revealing use of time

As a sixth type of cue, a few communications experts list "physical characteristics" (height, weight, hair color, age. etc.).

If all these types of cues are considered nonverbal communication, then two things become clear: (1) every verbal message is accompanied by a nonverbal one and (2) everyone is communicating something all the time (or "you can't not communicate"). With so much stimuli, it is impossible for anyone to process consciously every single cue received or to control every cue sent. Yet these nonverbal cues, some consciously "read" and some not, perform very distinct functions in communication:

(1) substitute for a verbal message (nod "yes", wave "hello", point out a person or item, etc.)
(2) clarify a verbal message (point direction, increase vocal volume to emphasize idea, set jaw to confirm commitment, etc.)
(3) regulate the flow of communication
(4) express emotion

The first two functions involve more obvious cues and are often consciously sent and received. The last two functions deserve a bit more comment.

Nonverbal cues that regulate conversation

We have a rather elaborate system of using nonverbal cues to regulate the flow of conversation. To communicate effectively, students need to understand the system. Here a few specific cues used to regulate conversation and their usual meanings.

CUE	USUAL MEANING
listener clearing throat	"I want to speak"
speaker using strong downward inflection	"I'm concluding my remarks"
speaker looking away for a few seconds from person he's been maintaining eye contact with; then looking back just as he stops speaking	"You should speak next"
listener nodding head	"Continue, I'm listening"
listener with raised finger or partially raised hand	"May I speak now?"
speaker with partially extended arm and palm out	"Don't interrupt me"
listener with partially extended arm and palm out	"Stop. I want to speak"

Cues that regulate the flow of conversation have rather firmly established meanings, but even these must be read in context. A few cues that regulate conversation vary in meaning with the positions of the individuals. For example, if the speaker and listener hold equal positions and the listener moves closer to the speaker, the listener usually means, "Tell me more." However, if the speaker is a subordinate of the listener and the listener moves toward the speaker, the listener often means, "Stop" or "I'm becoming impatient. Get to the point."

Nonverbal cues that express emotion

In work situations, most emotion is expressed nonverbally. According to Albert Mehrabian's studies, only 7% of all emotion is expressed verbally; the 93% that is expressed nonverbally is expressed through vocal cues (38%) and facial expressions (55%).[2] People frequently make comments like this: "It's not <u>what</u> you said that bothered me but <u>how</u> you said it." Such comments reveal the power of nonverbal emotional messages. Here are some common interpretations of vocal cues:

VOCAL CUE	USUAL INTERPRETATION
increased rate and pitch	speaker is pleased or excited
increased number of filled pauses ("ah", "um" etc.)	speaker is uncertain, anxious
increased number of unfilled pauses (silences)	speaker is anxious, angry, or contemptuous
decreased rate and variation in pitch (moving toward a slow monotone)	speaker is indifferent, sad, disinterested, bored

In addition to specific vocal cues, overall vocal quality is important. Mark Knapp reports that "some decisions concerning credibility--trustworthiness, dynamism, likeableness, competency--are made from word-free samples of the voice alone."[3] For whatever reasons, we recognize vocal quality as independent of the verbal message, and we label vocal quality. The labels used are often words that describe emotions. For example, after one telephone contact, one person may describe another as sounding friendly, pleasant, sad, phoney, et cetera. The label associated with the voice is extended to the speaker and affects the listener's perception of the speaker. As a result, everyone concerned about communicating effectively needs to know how others would ordinarily describe his or her overall vocal quality.

Facial cues express even more emotion than vocal cues. The three key facial areas--brow, eyes, and mouth--can function together or separately. When the three all express the same emotion and the emotion is intense (like rage or excitement), then most people correctly identify the emotion. The less intense the feeling, the more difficult it is to identify accurately from facial expressions.

Communications experts discuss three kinds of facial expressions: the partial, involving one area of the face; the blend, involving all three areas but each suggesting a different emotion ("hurt eyes", knit brow, and a smile); and the microfacial, a barely discernible flicker of emotion lasting as little as 1/5th of a second. Microfacials are the most truthful because they cannot be controlled, but learning to see them and read them requires special training. (Nonverbal cues that cannot be controlled are sometimes referred to as "nonverbal leakage").

INTERPRETING NONVERBAL CUES

Interpreting nonverbal cues is important, but difficult and potentially dangerous. First, the sheer quantity of cues is overwhelming. People send nonverbal messages when they are silent as well as when they are speaking, so the stimuli are continuous. Second, nonverbal cues do not arrive one at a time; instead numerous cues of different types arrive at the same time. These two characteristics of nonverbal communication make it impossible for anyone to consciously read and interpret all of the nonverbal information available at a given moment. What occurs, of necessity, is selection--some of it conscious and some of it unconscious.

Many experiments have revealed that perception is affected by expectation: we see what we expect to see or what we are looking for. For example, if you consider buying a van, you'll be surprised at how many vans suddenly seem to be on the streets and highways; the number has not substantially changed, but your interest and perception have changed. To minimize the dangers involved with interpreting nonverbal cues, people must remind themselves that their expectations affect which cues they notice and which they ignore. As a result, every interpretation should be consciously recognized as necessarily subjective.

The other way to reduce the danger of misinterpretation is to look for clusters or patterns of cues instead of isolated cues. If several cues all seem to support one interpretation, that interpretation is more likely to be valid. Essentially there are two approaches to reading clusters of nonverbal cues. One way is to interpret patterns in terms of the verbal message; the other is to interpret patterns in terms of the relationship between the speaker and the listener.

The relationship between verbal and nonverbal messages

A cluster of nonverbal cues can create an overall nonverbal message. That message may <u>complement</u> or reinforce the verbal one. For example, someone may smile broadly and approach with open arms and hand extended while saying in a friendly voice, "It's good to see you." On the other hand, the overall nonverbal message may <u>contradict</u> the verbal one (looking away and tapping fingers on desk while saying in a monotone, "That's interesting"). When the

nonverbal message contradicts the verbal one, the listener receives a "double message". If the nonverbal message is composed of several cues that all say the same thing, the receiver will usually believe the nonverbal message instead of the verbal one. Occasionally, the nonverbal message neither contradicts nor complements the verbal one: it is an auxiliary message intended for someone else (nodding hello to a passerby while continuing to talk).

The relationship between speaker and listener

Read in clusters, nonverbal cues can also indicate immediacy (the amount of like or dislike between speaker and listener), power, and responsiveness (the intensity of the interaction, the amount of interest or disinterest). A brief discussion of each aspect follows.

Immediacy

Immediacy is Albert Mehrabian's term for interpreting nonverbal cues in terms of how much the speaker and listener like or dislike one another. The continuum ranges from prefer/like to avoid/dislike and is closely associated with the ideas of psychological and physical distance. Below is a sample cluster of cues that would indicate strong immediacy and another cluster that would indicate non-immediacy.

Evidence of Immediacy (like, preference, positive eval.)	Evidence of Non-immediacy (dislike, avoid, negative eval.)
warm, friendly voice	harsh, loud voice
turning to face one another	turning away or looking away
moving closer together	increasing distance between
mutual and sustained eye contact	avoiding eye contact or looking "past" each other
leaning toward each other	leaning away
assuming similar postures	remaining silent
laughing and touching	

Unfortunately, cues do not often arrive in such strong clusters, and the content of the message can affect nonverbal signs of immediacy.

For example, if the verbal message is bad news, certain nonverbal cues that ordinarily suggest dislike (increasing distance and avoiding eye contact) might be present even when there is a strong degree of like between the speaker and listener. Similarly, if the verbal message contains good news, some cues of like might appear strong between people who do not ordinarily have positive attitudes toward one another.

Power

Most of us are familiar with nonverbal cues that suggest power, especially object and space cues. The larger the office, the thicker the carpet, the higher the floor, the more powerful the executive--usually. Time cues also indicate relative power: the more powerful, the less need to be punctual. The old university tradition of waiting 10 minutes for an assistant professor, 15 for an associate, and 20 or 30 for a full professor captures this idea. Below are a few other cues that usually indicate dominance and some that indicate submission.[4]

Dominance	Submission
relaxed, casual posture (leaning back in chair, elbows out and palms behind neck)	tense posture (sitting erect, leaning forward, hands clasped tightly)
free to turn back on others and not maintain eye contact	looking at speaker whole time
enter without knocking	always knock before entering
initiate & terminate conversations	wait for permission to speak
initiate off-job social contacts	wait for permission to sit
stare	lower eyes, avert gaze, blink extensively
interrupt	stop talking
touch	"cuddle" to the touch

crowd another's space	yield, move away
frown, look stern	smile
point	obey

These cues, like all nonverbal cues, should be read in clusters and balanced against other space, object, and time cues. People holding "equal positions" (in terms of the organizational chart) may not be equally powerful. Their nonverbal behavior will probably reveal who is the more powerful. Similarly, a person with an impressive office and title may not actually have as much power as some space and object cues suggest. Looking for nonverbal cues when that person interacts with others can help reveal the real extent of his or her power.

Interpreting clusters in terms of power--relative dominance and submission--can also help explain some common dilemmas. For example, why do workers often resent a supervisor who behaves "like a regular guy"? And why it is so much easier (or more natural) to obey one supervisor than another? Supervisors who "act like regular guys" and fail to exhibit dominant behaviors to their subordinates are saying, in effect, "I'm not powerful." As a result, when such supervisors do make demands, their workers ofter resent them ("who does he think he is?" or "who's he trying to impress"). Another possible reaction is to ignore the demand or not take it seriously ("she doesn't really mean it--she's just saying what she's supposed to"). The nonverbal behavior of those with power should match their positions; otherwise workers receive "double messages" that can create various problems.

A special word of caution is needed for interpreting cues in power terms. Many of the behaviors Americans associate with dominance or submission are learned behaviors. Since every person is affected by his or her upbringing, the sex, national origin, and age of an individual may affect power-related behaviors.

Sex In most cultures, women are socialized to behave submissively to men and older people. As a result women with power may exhibit submissive behavior to male subordinates. One study revealed, for instance, that women with power almost never interrupted men but regularly allowed themselves to be interrupted without commenting on being interrupted.[5]

National Origin Concepts such as appropriate physical distance, eye contact, and touching vary from culture to culture. As a result, first generation Americans, immigrants, and refugees may send nonverbal cues that could be misinterpreted in American terms of power. For example, people from Latin countries may invade physical space, stare, and touch without meaning to offend or assert power. They are simply behaving appropriately in terms of their own culture. Those from the Orient may behave more submissively than their position warrants. In particular, they may never stare (in fact they may avoid eye contact), smile often, and speak very quietly.

Age Even age may affect nonverbal behavior. A young person with power may appear to behave submissively to an older subordinate or equal. Similarly, a powerful older American man taught to "treat women with respect" may not exhibit the usual power cues. He may not stare, invade a woman's space, or interrupt her speech. In either case, signs of apparent submission have little, if anything, to do with power. They are merely the behaviors people were taught to exhibit to any "respectable" older person or female---whether an equal, a superior, or a subordinate.

Responsiveness

Clusters of cues may also be read to determine the intensity of verbal interaction. Responsiveness, an "index of activity and vitality," is usually interpreted on an interest/disinterest continuum. Facial and vocal cues are the most important types involved. In general, the greater the change in facial expression and vocal tone, the greater the interest. Minimal nonverbal activity, especially little change in facial expression or voice, usually signifies disinterest. The next page contains two clusters of cues--one that would ordinarily indicate a high level of responsiveness and interest and another cluster that would suggest a low degree of responsiveness, i.e. disinterest.

Interest (high responsiveness)	Disinterest (low responsiveness)
maintain high level of eye contact	little eye contact, looking "past", not "at")
nodding head	handling objects or checking time
making encouraging sounds ("Uh-ha", "umm", "good")	remaining silent
appropriately changing facial expressions	blank, expressionless face
expressive voice (changes in pitch, rate, volume, etc.)	monotone or near monotone
	slouching or frequent shifts in body position (restless)

These cues too must be read in context. In evaluating responsiveness, two types of problems can occur. One problem arises because most of us are quite good at feigning attention and interest. In American culture, appearing interested (giving cues like those listed above) is one way of being polite and showing respect. Americans, therefore, are most likely to fake attention when the speaker is a superior or is substantially older than the listener.

The other problem relates to the cultural heritage, personality, and physical condition of the parties. In some cultures, for example, direct eye contact and making sounds while someone is speaking are signs of disrespect. So some listeners may be interested but remain silent and avoid looking at the speaker. Personality also comes into play. Some people are simply more animated than others. They frequently gesture, change facial expressions, and vary their speaking rate, pitch, and volume. Others seldom "show their emotions". They may often speak in monotones and maintain relatively blank expressions. So cues of responsiveness need to be read in the context of what is "normal" or usual for the other person.

A related problem with interpreting cues for responsiveness is physical condition. For example, people who have Parkinson's disease or have had strokes may appear expressionless because they have little control over facial muscles. Someone with back problems or even uncomfortable shoes may shift position frequently, not because of disinterest but because of pain.

Summary

Nonverbal communication provides a rich source of information--one too rich to ignore and too complex to master completely. Made into a transparency and gradually disclosed, the "Key Points" sheet on the next page could serve to summarize class discussion. It should encourage students to "check out" nonverbal communication but remain humble about their abilities to interpret all nonverbal behavior.

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[1]This list of types has been adapted from Allen D. Frank's list in Communicating on the Job (Glenville, IL: Scott, Foresman and Co., 1982), p. 116.

[2]Albert Mehrabian, Silent Messages (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1971) as cited by Frank, p. 104.

[3]Mark L. Knapp, Nonverbal Communication in Human Interaction, 2nd ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1978), p. 362 as cited by Frank, p. 117.

[4]Earlier lists of sample cues were largely derived from Frank's narrative descriptions. This list is partially derived from Frank's narrative description (pp. 127-28) and partially a reprint of his Table 4-1 "Proposed Gestures of Dominance and Submission Among Humans," p. 129. The Table 4-1 portion begins with the word stare in the dominance column. Frank indicates that his Table 4-1 is adapted from Nancy Henley's summary of cues in her book, Body Politics: Power, Sex and Nonverbal Communication (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1977), p. 187.

[5]Barbara W. Eakins and R. Gene Eakins, Sex Differences in Human Communication (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1978), p. 69.

Key Points for Interpreting Nonverbal Cues

* Every verbal message is accompanied by a nonverbal one.

* The meaning of nonverbal cues varies by culture.

* The individual's expectations affect which cues are noticed and which ignored.

* The interpretation of nonverbal behavior is necessarily subjective.

* The dangers of misinterpretation can be reduced if you

1. look for patterns or clusters of cues and do not give much weight to any single cue.

2. try to interpret cues in the context of
   A. the entire communication setting
   B. the verbal message
   C. what you already know about the other person--
      personality
      national origin
      position
      sex
      age
      physical condition

3. remember the special considerations in interpreting cues for immediacy, power, and responsiveness

   A. Immediacy--problem is the nature of the verbal message may affect the nonverbal behavior
   B. Power--problem is the socialization (especially national origin, sex, and age) of the sender may affect the nonverbal behavior
   C. Responsiveness--problems are the American tradition of faking attention and the individual's personality, national origin, and physical condition may all affect nonverbal behavior.

CASE HISTORIES FOR NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

These brief case studies can be used as examples in lecture or class discussion, as situations for role-playing, or as the basis for written exercises (identify some of the cues by type or by whether they contradict or compliment the verbal message; analyze clusters of cues in terms of the relationship between speaker and listener; describe how you think you would feel about approaching each of these managers, etc.). It would also be possible to use the same case histories but have half of the class get a copy with Terry as a female and Pat as a male and half with Terry as male and Pat as female. To minimize sex differences, both here are male.

Case History #1: Terry, the Merchandising Manager

Terry is a merchandising manager for a small garment factory. The company has an "open door" policy for executives. When employees stand outside Terry's office, he acknowledges their presence with a single word, "Yes?" If an employee asks to speak with him, he usually responds with "I suppose" or "If you can keep it short, o.k." His desk is always bare of paperwork except for the piece he is working on, and the objects on his desk are all carefully arranged. To invite people to sit down, he usually points to a chair or nods in the direction of a chair. As the visitor sits, he may say, "Well, now" as he leans over his desk. He seldom turns toward or looks at the person talking to him. Throughout conversations, he fusses with pens, pencils, his marble paperweight, and other objects on the desk or jingles the change in his pocket. When he's not staring at his desktop, he's looking at his watch.

Case History #2: Pat, the Production Manager

Pat is a production manager for a small electronics firm. His firm also has an open door policy for executives. When an employee approaches his door, he greets the employee by name and asks if the employee needs to see him. If the employee says "yes," Pat responds, "Fine--have a seat" and points to the chair nearest him. His office is nearly always a mess with papers and file folders in piles all over the desk and credenza. As the visitor sits, he usually asks two questions: "Do you want some coffee or a coke?" and "Should I close the door?" With these things out of the way, he leans back in his chair, puts his hands behind his head, and grins. "Now, tell me what's on your mind." As the person talks, Pat frequently nods and says "Uh-huh."

NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION: A Summary

We communicate all the time. In fact, we can't avoid communicating. As one communications expert puts it, "Your body is chattering away even as you remain silent." All the messages you send that are not words--your gestures, tone of voice, facial expressions, posture, physical distance--are called nonverbal cues and together these form a nonverbal message. However, unlike words, which arrive one at a time, nonverbal cues (like eye contact, tone of voice, and facial expression) all arrive at the same time. As a result, the messages these nonverbal cues create are important but not easy to read.

Nonverbal messages serve four basic functions:

* They may substitute for a verbal message. Nodding "yes," waving "hello," and turning your back on a speaker to say "I'm not interested" are just a few examples of using nonverbal cues to replace verbal messages.

*They clarify the verbal message. Hand or arm movements may add information (point out a specific item, suggest size or direction), emphasize, or explain (to imitate a motion).

* They regulate the flow of communication. Changes in body position, eye contact, or gestures can signal a desire to speak, an invitation to speak, the end of one speaker's contribution, the end of the entire exchange.

* They express emotion. Facial expressions and tone of voice may be controlled to indicate emotional reactions like anger, excitement, frustration, and boredom, but other cues that express emotion (body position, hand movements, shifts in eye contact and physical distance) are more difficult to control.

The nonverbal message may complement or reinforce the verbal message (pointing to a chair when saying "Please sit down") or contradict the verbal message (looking away and tapping fingers on desk while saying in a monotone, "That's interesting)". When the noverbal message contradicts the verbal one, the listener receives a "double message." If the nonverbal message is composed of several cues that all say the same thing, the receiver will usually believe the nonverbal message instead of the verbal one. Occasionally, the nonverbal message neither contradicts nor complements the verbal one because it is an auxiliary message intended for someone else (nodding hello to a passerby while continuing to talk).

Most communications experts identify five types of nonverbal cues:

(1) vocal cues--include pitch, tone, rate of speech, non-word sounds (sighs, throat clearing), pauses in speech, any cue produced by human voice

(2) body cues--include gestures, facial expressions (smiles, scowls), posture, eye contact, body position, and any non-vocal cues produced directly by the body

(3) space cues--include the use of space (office size and seating arrangement) and

interpersonal distance (in American culture, 0-18" = intimate; 18"-4 = personal; 4' -12' = social; over 12' = public)

(4) object cues--include all cues (clothing, jewelry, briefcase, desk accessories) produce by owning, carrying, or handling objects

(5) time cues--include punctuality, time consciousness, being available only by appointment, looking at watch, or any cue revealing use of time

Like words, nonverbal cues can have more than one meaning, so read them in context. Do not assume that any one cue reveals the whole story or that any one nonverbal cue always means the same thing. In other words, be wary of popular works suggesting, for instance, that the single category of body cues can be "read" in isolation or that one body cue, like sitting with legs apart, only has one meaning (sexual invitation). Such simplistic thinking could lead to major problems. Nonverbal communication is complex, and most non-verbal messages are composed of many cues from different categories.

If you look for clusters of cues (several cues from different categories), you can use nonverbal signals to help determine someone's power (relative dominance or submission), degree of like or dislike of another, and overall responsiveness (amount of reaction, intensity).

TIPS FOR UNDERSTANDING MESSAGES MORE FULLY

1. Recognize the fact that messages are made up of both verbal and nonverbal cues.

2. Practice looking for different types of nonverbal cues; consciously use some of your extra listening time to assess what is happening nonverbally (remember you can comprehend 500-600 words per minute and most speakers talk at a rate of 125-150 words per minute).

3. Don't give too much weight to isolated nonverbal cues--look for clusters of clues instead.

4. When you receive a double message and the nonverbal cues are consistent, trust the nonverbal message enough to check it out (ask for feedback or change your behavior to see if the other changes too--if someone has been sending defensive cues, bakc off and see if the other relaxes).

5. Remember some nonverbal cues can be easily faked (interest, nervousness, or excitement in tone of voice and broad facial expressions like smiles, frowns, or furrowed brows may well be controlled expressions of emotion).

Where can I learn more about nonverbal communcation?

In human development courses like JH 105 or HD 106, you may study some types of nonverbal cues, particularly body, space, and time cues.

In Speech 105 (public speaking), you could learn more about vocal and body cues; if you are specifically interested in improving the quality of your voice (tone, pitch, rate, and pronunciation), consider Speech 109, a diction and articulation course.

NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION: Application

1. Ask five or six people you know to describe your voice. Ask them, "If you didn't know me and had only heard me talk on the telephone, what would your impression of me be?" Use this space to make notes about their comments.

2. Ask two people you know well to mimic you. Ask each one to first mimic you talking to someone you like and then talking to someone you dislike or distrust. Make notes of what you notice and then discuss these notes with the person who has mimicked you.

Notes from First Person's Imitation of Me

Talking with Someone I Like	Talking with Someone I Dislike or Distrust

Notes from Second Person's Imitation of Me

Talking with Someone I Like	Talking with Someone I Dislike or Distrust

3. From these two exercises, what have you learned about your own nonverbal behavior? If you have identified an area for improvement, develop an action plan so you can improve. If you have no area that needs improvement right now, develop an action plan to learn more about nonverbal communication--either your own or others'.

BUSINESS WRITING

I. OBJECTIVES: The student will be able to

A. list at least three ways that poor writing can cost a company money

B. describe three basic characteristics of effective business writing

C. list three aspects of correctness in business writing

D. define "reader-centered writing" and explain what characterizes the content, organization, and style of reader-centered work

E. describe the characteristics of content, organization, and style in writer-centered work

F. list three basic guidelines a writer can follow to make the style more reader-centered

II. MODULE MATERIALS

A. Instructor's Review of Topic

B. Exercise: Errors That Bother Executives

1. Student Handout: Can You Avoid Errors That Really Bother Executives? (4 pages)
2. Grading System and Answers for Student Handout (5 pages)

C. Student Summary Sheet: Business Writing

D. Application: Writing A Memo

E. Appendix A: Additional Information on Hairston Study

1. Information on Cover Letter and Respondents
2. Sample Corrections of All Items

III. OTHER RESOURCES

A. Flesch, Rudolph. On Business Communication: How To Say What You Mean in Plain English. New York: Barnes and Noble, 1972. (The hardback title of this same book is Say What You Mean; it is published by Harper and Row.) Flesch, a well-known business writing consultant, has written several books on the subject of business communications. His books are very readable and easy to find in new and used book stores. Any one of his books could help you prepare to teach this unit or be recommended to students as a source of additional information. I've selected this particular one because it is filled with

examples of effective and ineffective letters and memos and provides more detail on style than some of his other works.

B. Holcombe, Marya W. and Judith K. Stein. Writing for Decision Makers: Memos and Reports with a Competitive Edge. Belmont, Ca.: Lifetime Learning Publications, a division of Wadsworth, 1981. This book provides a how-to approach for report writing that is essentially an extension of the principles presented in the instructor's review of writing. It focuses on a problem-solving approach to business writing and includes information on memos as short reports. The detailed case studies in the appendix could be useful for those interested in doing more than one session on business writing.

C. Murphy, Dennis. Better Business Communications. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1957. This book is extremely readable and well illustrated with cartoons. Five of its seventeen chapters deal specifically with writing, but almost every chapter contains relevant information. Each chapter is followed by exercises labeled "case studies". Although some are not case studies in the usual sense, all provide useful ideas for developing your own exercises.

D. O'Hayre, John. Gobbledygook Has Gotta Go. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, n.d. This 112 page book was written for employees of the Bureau of Land Management. In the preface O'Hayre says, "The Bureau of Land Management is people, a scattering of persons in nearly 100 towns across the continent. We become an organization only when we work intelligently together to reach common goals. And we can work together this way only when we understand each other, when we communicate clearly." After referring to the problems created by poor writing, he says, "We must abandon soggy formality and incoherence in favor of modern personal communications. This book points the way in 16 essays." The book is valuable because it is filled with samples of poor writing and possible improvements. It also includes a detailed explanation of one readability formula (the Lensear Write Formula) and gives Lensear ratings for various magazines. One chapter deals exclusively with the cost of writing, and though the figures are out-dated, the factors involved are interesting.

E. "The Beginning", Program 1 of the English 101 Telecourse. An excerpt of this videotape could provide an effective introduction to business writing. The tape includes brief interviews with several people who talk about how much writing their jobs require (#100-190 on counter) and how surprised they were to discover that their jobs involved writing (#275-290 on counter). Those selected represent various occupations. At Richland, copies of the tape are in the library and in the Center for Independent Study. The relevant section of this tape is 5-7 minutes long. You can use the counter and show only those sections or you can begin at about 80 (Hello I'm Dee Brock) because she immediately gives figures for how many hours a day are spent communicating.

WRITING: A Review for Instructors

Writing is another form of one-way communication, but not a popular one. "In fact, a recent survey of 200 executives found that 72 percent consider writing business memos and reports at the top of their 'hate list' . . .. Only waiting in airports, company politics and attending meetings were listed as more distasteful chores."[1]

Mixed in with hate and dislike is a lot of worry about writing. Why? Because most people don't consider it a natural part of daily life. After all, we don't grow up writing every day of our lives, so it is not as familiar or comfortable as speaking and listening. In addition, we have all been criticized for our writing--if not by teachers, then by friends or bosses. The idea that we are accountable for what we write, that words and sentences can be pointed at and labeled "wrong", has made almost everyone a bit reluctant to put pen to paper.

As a result, many people follow the adage that the best defense is a strong offense. When asked about their writing, they say, "Well, I'm not a writer and I don't pretend to be. I'm an accountant [or engineer or secretary or manager]." Essentially they are hiding behind the myth that writers are born, not made. And they expect their announcement to have a "Case closed!" effect. Many are shocked when their bosses persist in expecting them to produce memos, reports, and letters that get the job done.

Money is one of the reasons businesses want employees to write well. Ineffective writing, like ineffective speaking and listening, costs a business money. If the receiver has to read a memo or report twice to understand what the writer intended, the company has lost money. If the receiver has to call the sender to clarify the message, the company has lost money. If the receiver misunderstands the message and does more (or less) than necessary, the company has lost money.

According to a recent survey, misunderstanding and wasted time are the two most common problems created by poor business writing.[2] A research team from the University of Texas at Austin (UTA) interviewed nearly 200 Texas employees from different types

of businesses and different occupations. When asked to identify the most serious effects of poor writing, 58% cited misunderstanding as one of the most serious and 49% cited loss of time.

Poorly written letters, brochures, and reports can create other negative effects as well. Customers, offended by a poorly worded letter, may take their business to another company. Potential customers may not buy because they don't understand the response to their inquiry. In citing common negative effects of poor writing, 40% of the respondents in the UTA survey mentioned bad public image, 23% loss of impact, and 17% direct loss of business (17%).[3] Poor writing can even lead to law suits being filed and won.

Poor writing costs businesses money in another way too. Writing is a process as well as a product. If an employee is a poor writer who needs to spend an hour or two writing a simple memo, the writing process is costing the company more money than it would if the employee had effective writing strategies. As a result, businesses are interested in employees who can quickly produce writing that communicates clearly. Both product and process are important.

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE BUSINESS WRITING

First, effective business writing is writing that gets the job done. For example, a memo that describes a new procedure for inserting totals on time cards will be considered effective if supervisors understand the instructions well enough to adopt the new procedure without having to call or write for more information. So effective business writing is clear, complete, and accurate. Unlike some types of writing, the success or failure of a business letter, report, or memo can usually be determined rather quickly. The receiver's actions (or lack of them) provide the sender with feedback.

Second, effective business writing is cost effective. This means the best memo is the one that accomplishes its purpose most quickly. It tells the reader what the reader needs to know--and tells it directly and courteously. It is neither too brief nor too long. Long-winded writers waste company money by taking up too much of their own time, the typist's time, and the reader's

time. Those who say too little also waste company money because their brevity can lead to errors that must be corrected later or to questions that demand responses.

Third, effective business writing is usually correct. Correctness is a factor in business writing, but it is probably the least important of these three characteristics. In the Communispond, Inc. survey of 200 executives, 95% "said that business memos and letters are wordy, unclear, and disorganized."[4] In another survey, business leaders were asked, "What is the most annoying feature of writing that comes across your desk?" Their written responses focused on content, leading researcher Maxine Hairston to conclude: "they care even more about clarity and economy than they do about surface features [i.e. grammar, punctuation, usage]."[5] In other words, business people care more about writing that gets the job done in a cost effective way than about correctness. Why? Because correctness does not guarantee effectiveness. However, if a memo or letter is clear and concise, it should also be basically correct.

I hesitate to mention correctness here because most people worry about it too much and too soon. The time to worry about correctness is at the end of the writing process--after the writer is pleased with the content. Research supports this. Ineffective writers worry about correctness throughout the writing process while effective writers worry about it at the end of the process.[6] In fact, an inexperienced writer may worry about the spelling of a word before he even knows what his main points will be. Such concern with correctness can create problems instead of solve them.

Essentially in business writing, the problem that correctness is supposed to solve is an image problem. Companies are concerned about appearances (corporate image) and so are employees. Everyone wants to "look good" to coworkers and supervisors. The fear is that "If my writing is filled with errors, everyone will think I'm dumb or don't care." But when people worry about correctness more than content, they leave themselves open to the very criticisms they are hoping to avoid. For example, in their concern about correct usage or spelling, they may omit important facts or include incorrect information. Such mistakes are more likely to cause others to label them as careless or dumb than a few grammatical errors would.

Though correctness is not the most important factor in effective business writing, it is a factor. In business writing, correctness includes spelling, form, and usage (sentence structure, punctuation, word choice). Following these tips can make business writing more acceptable in terms of correctness.

* Spell words correctly. Even executives who are poor spellers themselves expect to see correctly spelled words. Most who mentioned surface features in the Hairston study "singled out bad spelling as the most annoying feature they encountered."[7] With word processors becoming more common, correct spelling should become easier. Not only do word processors make it simpler to correct misspellings, but most word processors include "spelling" or "proofreading" programs. These programs can quickly check a final copy for spelling and typographical errors.

* Follow the prescribed format. Most large corporations and academic disciplines have their own preferences about written products. These preferences deal with details like capitalization, abbreviations, comma usage, and position of headings; with organizational patterns for articles, reports, or memos; and with style and tone. Writers must conform to the guidelines (which appear in a "style manual" or "writer's guide") for their work to be considered correct.

* Learn to recognize and correct the usage errors that most bother business people. Not all errors are equally serious. When Dr. Hairston sent questionnaires to 101 professionals in Austin, 84 responded; they represented 63 different occupations.[8] They rated each of the 66 items on the questionnaire as "bothers me a lot" or "bothers me a little" or "does not bother me". The responses revealed that certain errors bothered almost everyone "a lot" while other errors bothered almost no one. In other words, business writing does not have to be error-free; executives do not expect the kind of grammatical perfection that a rigid English teacher might hope for. However, business writing does need to be free of certain errors for most executives to consider it acceptable. (See Appendix A for details on this study.)

The rest of this module focuses on content, organization, and style instead of correctness. The concept of reader-centered writing is used as the cornerstone because students can quickly grasp it and use it to improve their writing.

WHAT IS READER-CENTERED WRITING?

To get the job done in a cost effective way, business writing needs to be reader-centered, not writer-centered. What this means is that the content (what's included and what's omitted), the organization (order of details), and the style must work together to fill the reader's needs. The main concern is to make the writing easy for the reader to understand and use. Each pair of examples below reveals one aspect of the difference between writer-centered and reader-centered work.

DIFFERENCE IN CONTENT

Content: Example of a Writer-Centered Letter

Dear Ms. Green:

In this day of shrinking budgets and large numbers of applicants, I hope that you will understand the desirability—even the necessity—of our answering your recent inquiry with this form letter. We regret not being able to respond more personally, but we do not have the time or secretarial staff to prepare individual letters for the many inquiries we are receiving in this time of high unemployment.

We have examined carefully your letter and resume, and we regret to report our decision not to place your application among those that we will pursue further through interviews. However, I hope that you will be successful in your search for a satisfactory position.

Yours sincerely,

Content: Example of a Reader-Centered Letter

Dear Ms. Green:

Your interest in XYZ Corporation is appreciated.

A careful review of your application indicates that we have no present or prospective openings that would fit your qualifications.

I hope that your professional efforts meet with success.

Sincerely,

DIFFERENCE IN ORGANIZATION

Organization: Example of a Writer-Centered Memo

TO: Faculty teaching credit classes in RISD schools

FROM:

SUBJECT: Off-campus classes

As many of you know from experience in the past, there are various advantages and disadvantages to teaching credit courses at off-campus sites. Probably one of the best advantages you have is maturity in the type of students you teach, a fact that many of you have mentioned on more than one occasion. However, many of you have also experienced some of the disadvantages associated with teaching at an off-campus location.

One of the problems that we most regret is the fact that you must make special trips to the Richland campus once each week to pick up your mail and messages. Another problem is the availability, or should I say the lack of availability, of audio-visual equipment at the site when you need it. A third problem is the last-minute changing of your schedule because of new information about the schedule of the site. You will be happy to know that we hope to solve these problems.

In the past some of you have received word at the very last minute that one of your classes could not meet because the building was being used for a special event of some sort or because of the fact that the building would be closed for some other reason we had not known. This created real problems for you, and many of you even had to spend hours trying to contact your students by telephone so that you could tell them of the cancellation. We have really appreciated your efforts and time in past years and are pleased to inform you that this will not be necessary during the current semester.

I have invested a substantial amount of time in trying to contact the authorities. After many attempts, I finally was able to reach Dr. Dan Lair who is the Assistant Superintendent of Secondary Education for the RISD. As a result of this effort, designed to save you time, we already know the relevant dates for this spring semester. Richardson High School will have open house on March 3rd and the entire Richardson School District will be celebrating Spring Break March 23-27, one week after Richland's Spring Break. We hope this won't inconvenience you or your students.

Thank you so much for all your efforts of the finest type that you put out to help us maintain a program of quality of the highest order at our many off-campus teaching locations.

Organization: Example of Reader-Centered Memo

RICHLAND COLLEGE
of the
DALLAS COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT

TO: Karen Nixon
Jess Kirkley
Helen Molanphy
Randy Wright

FROM: Jane Peterson

DATE: January 23, 1981

SUBJECT: Schedule - Tuesday March 3rd, Spring Break and Inclement Weather

Tuesday, March 3, 1981

Richardson High School is holding Open House on Tuesday, March 3, so your classroom will not be available. Please notify your students that class will not be held March 3rd.

Spring Break

The RISD's Spring Break (March 23rd-27th) does not coincide with the DCCCD's Spring Break (March 16th-21st). Since Richardson High School will be closed the week of March 23rd-27th, please announce that the week of March 23rd-27th will be the Spring Break for college students attending classes at Richardson High School.

Inclement Weather

In cases of inclement weather, remind your students to listen for the RISD's closing instead of the DCCCD's or Richland's. If RISD closes for inclement weather, your classes will not meet even though Richland and DCCCD may be officially open.

DIFFERENCE IN STYLE

Style: Example of Writer-Centered Memo[9]

To: State Director
From: John Lawbook, Solicitor
Subject: Roland Occupancy Trespass

This responds to your memorandum dated February 21, 1964, requesting that we review and comment concerning the subject Roland trespass on certain lands under reclamation withdrawal.

We appreciate your apprising us of this matter and we certainly concur that appropriate action is in order to protect the interests of the United States.

We readily recognize the difficult problem presented by this situation, and if it can be otherwise satisfactorily resolved, we would prefer to avoid trespass action. If you determine it permissible to legalize the Roland occupancy and hay production by issuance of a special use permit, as suggested in your memorandum, we have no objection to that procedure.

Any such permit should be subject to cancellation when the lands are actively required for reclamation purposes and should provide for the right of the officers, agents, and employees of the United States at all times to have unrestricted access and ingress to, passage over, and egress from all said lands, to make investigations of all kinds, dig test pits and drill test holes, to survey for reclamation and irrigation works, and to perform any and all necessary soil and moisture conservation work.

If we can be of any further assistance in this matter, please advise. We would appreciate being informed of the disposition of this problem.

Style: Example of Reader-Centered Memo

To: State Director
From: John Lawbook, Solicitor
Subject: Roland Occupancy Trespass

Got your memo on the Roland trespass case. You're right; action is needed. The problem is tough, and we'd like to avoid trespass action if we can. So, if you can settle this case by issuing Roland a special-use permit, go ahead. Please spell out the Government's cancellation rights and right-to-use provisions in the permit.

If we can be of further help, please call. Keep us informed.

Each pair of examples highlights one difference between writer-centered and reader-centered work. However, there is some overlap. For example, the long off-campus memo is as much writer-centered in content as it is in organization. This summary of key differences between writer-centered and reader-centered work should help you discuss the examples in more than one way.

DIFFERENCES IN	WRITER-CENTERED	READER-CENTERED
Content	emphasizes writer's problems	focuses on reader's interests & concerns
	includes unnecessary background (a survey of what the writer knows)	
Organization	chronological or associative (tracing writer's thoughts or information gathering process)	ordered by reader's need to know (usually from most important to least important)
	main points are "hidden" in the middle of paragraphs, often near the end of the memo or letter	main points appear at beginning or are clearly marked (in headings or by underlining etc.)
Style	long sentences lots of jargon stuffy or stilted tone	short sentences "plain English" words personal pronouns (you, I, we, etc.)

Learning to produce reader-centered writing is not easy. In fact, it demands a major shift for inexperienced writers, especially those who have done well in school. To be successful in school, students must produce writer-centered work. Their task is to let the instructor see how much information they have. They must use jargon whenever they can. The whole focus is on what the writers (students) know and how they have come to know it (their own thought processes, research methods, etc.). In contrast, effective business writing focuses on what the reader actually needs to know. The writer's problems, thought processes, and methods are often irrelevant. Because this represents such a major shift for students, there's a how-to section on each aspect--content, organization, and style. A few comments in each section are addressed to you as instructor, but most are directed to students so you can duplicate the sections as handouts if you wish.

HOW TO MAKE THE CONTENT READER CENTERED

One key to reader-centered writing is trying to put yourself in the reader's position. Assume that your interests and concerns are different from the reader's. Then ask yourself questions like these:

Who will be the reader(s)?
What do I want the reader(s) to do? (How will I judge whether the writing has been successful?)
What do I want the reader(s) to know?
What can I assume the reader(s) already knows?
What will be the reader(s)' concerns about the topic?
What will be the reader(s)' attitude toward the topic?

Don't stop when you've identified your readers as "Chris Brown" or "line supervisors". That's just the beginning. You need to think about what you want them to do, how the information might affect them, and how you want them to be affected.

Assume that the Board of Directors of XYZ, Inc. has just approved plans to open a new plant in Utah. The President of XYZ is going to write a memo to all employees announcing the plans.

If he's an ineffective writer, he'll start thinking like this:

"Umm, this will go to all employees so I need to keep the language simple. Let's see, the new plant . . . first I need to tell them how much time we've spent selecting the site and how we've gone about it . . . and the reasons (good labor pool, reasonable wage scales—uh, maybe not that—reasonable construction costs, yeah that's better). Then they'll want to know how big it's going to be (sq. ft. and number of employees), the design, the construction schedule . . ."

Notice how quickly he passes over his audience and begins thinking about what to include. Also note that what he wants to include interests him and the Board of Directors, but will it interest the readers? What will his readers' concerns be?

However, if he were an effective writer, he'd start thinking like this:

"Umm, this will go to all employees so I need to keep the language simple, not too technical. Okay, I can worry about that later. Let's see, the new plant . . . what will their concerns be about it? Hmm, the average worker may not know anything about this yet (VP's know it's in the works, but they're a small part of the

audience). Back to the average worker—like line workers—okay, they don't know anything about the new plant unless they've heard something through the grapevine. Umm . . . what will their response be? . . . Maybe fear of being transferred or losing job. They may think that with money going to a new plant there will be cutbacks here—if not in personnel then in equipment or supplies. Yeah, they're likely to fear negative effects and I've got to try to offset that ... it's bad for morale. So, I've got to show them how this new plant will benefit them, not just the company. Okay, let's see. I want them to view the new plant not as a threat but as a help. . . a help—sure, broader base for company means more stability, greater job security for them. What else? Expected increase in profits is money for them (profit sharing). . . also new opportunities for advancement—must mention not requiring transfers but some will want to, so there should be openings here and there. Let's see, what else might they want or need to know—probably when production is scheduled to begin in Utah and with how many employees. Hmm, that ought to cover it—job security, money, and more opportunities for those who are interested—all benefits, yeah that fits in. Okay, I've got my main points, now what's the best way to order them? . . ."

With this kind of thinking, the president will produce a reader-centered memo. He's tried to put himself in the reader's position and cover the reader's concerns, interests, values, and attitudes. But he's also done something else--he's developed personal goals. He wants to offset negative effects and make employees see "how the new plant will benefit them, not just the company." He then uses these goals to generate and select the information he'll include. Later, when he "gets stuck" during drafting (physically writing or dictating) and pauses, he'll return to these goals. During pauses, he'll think more about his audience and use his goals to evaluate what he's said and decide what to say next.

Though the situation and person are fictional, the thoughts I've made up for the President of XYZ are modeled on the thoughts of writers working. Within the last ten years, researchers have begun investigating how writers work by using "writing protocols". With this method, participants say out loud what they are thinking from the moment they begin a writing task. Their words are taped and all pieces of paper (from doodles through the final draft) kept. The tapes are transcribed and studied along with the notes and writing. Some researchers use only working people with degrees as subjects, some only use students, and some use both.[10]

The thoughts of the XYZ President were modeled on transcripts of the opening minutes of composing. The thoughts of him as effective writer were modeled on those of subjects classified as experts (people who write regularly on their jobs and are considered effective writers). The thoughts of him as an ineffective writer were modeled on those of novices (people who do not write regularly or are not considered effective writers on the job). Below is an informal summary of major differences between expert and novice writers.

Ineffective writers (novices who produce writer-centered work)

* think briefly about audience (about one-third the time that experts spend)[11]

* then start generating information in terms of "what I know about the topic" and worrying about how to organize it

* when they "get stuck" during drafting they either
  -- reread the last sentence several times
OR -- review the "assignment" (i.e. let's see, I've got to tell them about the new plant)

Effective writers (experts who produce reader-centered work)

* spend much more time "playing" with the idea of audience, especially the audience's interests, ideas, and concerns

* from the audience's interests and concerns, they develop personal goals

* they use these personal goals to generate and select information

* when they "get stuck" in drafting, they
  -- think about the audience and their goals again (i.e. let's see, I'm trying to cover job security here)
  -- refine their goals and sense of audience
  -- use their goals and sense of audience to evaluate what they've done and what they'll do next
  -- reread (usually longer sections, not just the previous sentence)

In effect, the experts approach writing as a problem-solving task: "Effective writers do not simply express thought, but transform it in certain complex but describable ways for the needs of the reader."[12]

HOW TO MAKE THE ORGANIZATION READER CENTERED

If you can make the content reader-centered, learning to make the organization reader-centered is easy. First, focus on what the reader needs to know. Then remember that businesses are very concerned about time, so the reader must be able to see the central point quickly. With these two principles, you can avoid the pitfalls of writer-centered organization.

When organization is writer-centered, the information is presented either chronologically or associatively (as the ideas occurred to the writer). The President of XYZ as an ineffective writer was headed toward a chronological or narrative account--beginning with the process of selecting the site. The long, ineffective memo on off-campus classes is associative, organized by the order in which all ideas related to off-campus teaching occurred to the writer. The result in either case is the same: the central point--what matters to the readers--is hidden somewhere in the last half or fourth of the memo.

In letters and memos, the reader should be able to see the main point quickly. Most letters and memos should begin with what the reader must do or know and end with the least important information. Essentially the organizational pattern is from must know to should know to could know. If a memo announces a meeting that readers are supposed to attend, the information in the memo should be organized like this:

First Paragraph: What the reader must know

date, time, and place of meeting;
general statement of topic
what readers must bring to meeting
(3rd qtr. sales reports, etc.)

Second Paragraph: What the reader should know

reason for meeting (background information, goals etc.)
speaker's name, length of meeting, etc.

Third Paragraph: What the reader could know

who else will be there
whether refreshments will be served
ETC.

With this pattern, readers don't have to scan the entire memo or letter to find out what to do. If they stop reading at the end of the first paragraph, they already have all the critical information. In longer memos and letters, the principle remains the same, but two or three paragraphs may be needed for each category instead of the one shown above.

The major exception to this pattern is the sales letter which doesn't get to the central point ("order this") until the end. However, most students will not have to write sales letters because companies hire specialists to write them. Queries and cover letters for job applications are similar to sales letters and do not follow the pattern above. Because they are special letters which students will be writing, they are presented with resumes in a separate module.

But what about reports? Reports are more complex documents, but the principles of focusing on what the reader needs to know and placing the main ideas at the beginning are clear. That's why reports usually include an executive summary or abstract--so the reader can get the message quickly. The format of the summary varies a little from company to company, but the intent is clear: the reader should be able to understand the major points of the report by reading only the summary. In principle then, the summary can be treated like a memo. The organization of sections within a report (Procedures, Recommendations, etc.) will usually be dictated by the traditions of your technical field or by company policy. Within these sections, the must know-should know-could know can help in every case except the Procedures section which must be organized chronologically.

HOW TO MAKE THE STYLE READER CENTERED

How formal a report, letter, or memo should be depends mostly on the purpose and the audience, but company policy will be a factor too. A report to all stockholders of a company will be more formal than a report to an immediate supervisor. A sales

letter to a customer will be less formal than one spelling out the conditions for a refund.

Despite these differences, the national trend is toward less formal, less stilted business writing. Business letters should not sound as if they were produced by an anti-people machine. In the past, business letters often began something like this:

> "Pursuant to your inquiry regarding the status of your bill dated 4-15-82, our auditors have checked your account and determined that an error was made."

Today that letter might begin like this:

> "You are right. We made a mistake on your bill."

The second opening is clearer, shorter, and friendlier--it sounds as if it was written by one human being to another.

To make the style more reader-centered, the writer can follow three basic guidelines.

1. Help readers picture themselves in the text.

When readers have trouble understanding text, they try to place themselves in the text.[13] So someone reading, "If an applicant wishes to be considered . . ." will translate it into "If I want to be considered" or "If they are going to consider me, I will need to . . .." To help the reader do this, the writer can

* address the reader directly, by name or by using a pronoun (you)

* use action verbs (decide, meet, discuss, etc.) instead of nouns made out of verbs (i.e. decision, meeting, discussion, etc.)

* write in the active voice to make the "do-er" of the act clear (i.e. write "the committee believes" instead of "it is the belief of the committee")

2. Choose words that readers can understand.

Writing is a communication tool, and your purpose should be to inform, instruct, or persuade your reader. Your purpose is not to impress the reader. As Dennis Murphy points out, "Another reason for bad [business] writing is a desire to impress with showy language, especially when there's little to say. This pose works on a few who know no better, but most people aren't gullible. They can

smell artificiality a mile off and detect it right away in a politician's speech, a minister's sermon, a professor's lecture, or a businessman's letters and reports."[14]

To make the language clear, you can

* substitute short, familiar words for jargon:

USE	INSTEAD OF
begin	implement
depend on	contingent upon
end	terminate
help (noun)	assistance
help (verb)	facilitate
keep	retain
only	exclusively
require	necessitate
start	originate
try	endeavor
use	utilize

Etc.

* explain or define technical words that you cannot change

* be consistent in your use of terms (i.e. if you're referring to one building, don't refer to it as the building, the plant, the facility, the physical plant, etc. all in one section--such "variety" just confuses readers)

3. Write clear, easy-to-follow sentences.

Long, complicated sentences can confuse a reader even when the individual words are clear. "Research and practice show that the average reader can remember only a few ideas at a time. After every few thoughts, readers need to pause and chunk together what they have read. The period at the end of a sentence is one signal for such a pause."[15] You can make your style more reader-centered by following these suggestions:

* keep your sentences short
(For most business writing, your sentences should average no more than 18 words, so your longest sentences should be under 25 words)

* put the parts of each sentence into logical order
(Assume a sentence mentions a date, action, and place. The pieces of each part should be together like this: "Before May 15, 1982, you should take the plans for layout and design to ABC Printers at 483 Main Street." The action should not appear in bits and pieces like this: "You should, before May 15, 1982, take to the ABC Printers at 483 Main Street the plans for layout and cover design.")

* use lists when you have several items to discuss

How strong is the plain language movement?

The trend toward less formal, more readable writing is strong. And it is gaining momentum in business, government, and even law. Carter issued two Executive Orders "requiring that government regulations and forms be written in plain English and be as easy for users as possible."[16] Under Reagan, this movement is continuing. Malcolm Baldrige, Secretary of the Department of Commerce, has made clear writing a high priority:

> Baldrige . . . issued a memo forbidding the use of such "bureaucratese" as "optimize, to impact, to interface, to maximize, viable, input, effectuated, output, ongoing, prioritize, parameter," and even "glad". In addition, he ordered a halt to the use in memos, letters and other departmental writing of such phrases as "bottom line, at the present time, more importantly, great majority, enclosed herewith," and "untimely death."[17]

To enforce Baldrige's new rules, an intern wrote a computer program that spots any word on the unacceptable list and flashes a "do not use" warning. Though employees may not be thrilled with running every communication through the program, Commerce department officials say "memos, letters and all written communication have become much easier to read."[18]

The emphasis on readable writing is taking other forms too. By the end of 1981, 25 states had laws or regulations requiring that insurance policies be written in "plain English".[19] In addition, seven states have passed laws requiring that all consumer contracts be written in plain English and similar bills are pending in four states.[20] Most states use readibility indexes to define "plain English" or "everyday language". Though definitions vary a little from state to state, the intent is clear: the average American consumer should be able to read a contract and understand exactly what his or her benefits and responsibilities are. Many lawyers and law schools are supporting this movement. In fact, six major law schools have been working with the Document Design Center to develop a new writing curriculum for law students.[21] The goal is to teach law students to write clearly and directly (in "plain English") so that they can draft contracts, petitions, and other legal documents that will be understandable and legally binding.

A SUMMARY BY EXAMPLE

The best business writing is reader-centered in content, organization, and style. It gets the job done in a cost effective way because it is clear, complete, accurate, and concise. The best is also correct even though correctness does not guarantee effectiveness.

The memo below happens to be correct, but it is not effective because it is not reader-centered. The revisions which follow it demonstrate how much the concept of reader-centered writing can help.[22] If students can make their writing more reader-centered in any way--content, organization, or style--their writing will improve.

Original Memo

To: State Director
From: John Lawbook, Solicitor
Subject: Roland Occupancy Trespass

This responds to your memorandum dated February 21, 1964, requesting that we review and comment concerning the subject Roland trespass on certain lands under reclamation withdrawal.

We appreciate your apprising us of this matter and we certainly concur that appropriate action is in order to protect the interests of the United States.

We readily recognize the difficult problem presented by this situation, and if it can be otherwise satisfactorily resolved, we would prefer to avoid trespass action. If you determine it permissible to legalize the Roland occupancy and hay production by issuance of a special use permit, as suggested in your memorandum, we have no objection to that procedure.

Any such permit should be subject to cancellation when the lands are actively required for reclamation purposes and should provide for the right of the officers, agents, and employees of the United States at all times to have unrestricted access and ingress to, passage over, and egress from all said lands, to make investigations of all kinds, dig test pits and drill test holes, to survey for reclamation and irrigation works, and to perform any and all necessary soil and moisture conservation work.

If we can be of any further assistance in this matter, please advise. We would appreciate being informed of the disposition of this problem.

Revision #1--Reader-Centered in Content and Organization
(Result of Deleting Words and Sentences)

To: State Director
From: John Lawbook, Solicitor
Subject: Roland Occupancy Trespass

We would prefer to avoid trespass action. If you determine it permissible to legalize Roland's occupancy by issuance of a special use permit, we have no objection. Any such permit should be subject to cancellation and should provide for the right of the United States to perform all necessary work.

We would appreciate being informed of the disposition of the problem.

Revision #2--Reader-Centered in Style Only
(Result of Substituting Simpler Words in Original)

To: State Director
From: John Lawbook, Solicitor
Subject: Roland Occupancy Trespass

Got your memo on the Roland trespass case. You're right; action is needed. The problem is tough, and we'd like to avoid trespass action if we can. So, if you can settle this case by issuing Roland a special-use permit, go ahead. Please spell out the Government's cancellation rights and right-to-use provisions in the permit.

If we can be of further help, please call. Keep us informed.

Revision #3--Reader-Centered in Every Way
(Result of Deleting Points and Substituting Simpler Words)

To: State Director
From: John Lawbook, Solicitor
Subject: Roland Occupancy Trespass

We'd like to avoid trespass action, if possible. So, if you can settle this case by issuing Roland a special-use permit, go ahead.

Please keep us informed.

Notes on the Roland Memo and Revisions

The original memo is an almost perfect example of writer-centered work. You can use the characteristics listed on page 9 of this module to discuss it. The only writer-centered characteristic it does not illustrate well is the writer's concern with his own problems, but that is well-illustrated in the rejection letter with the writer's mention of limited budget and secretarial staff. You will need to tell students that the fourth paragraph in the original outlines a standard, special-use permit which the intended reader is familiar with because he issues those permits regularly.

The first revision retains the language of the original but omits unnecessary words, sentences, and even paragraphs. It is reader-centered in content because it eliminates most of the points which the reader does not need to be told. You can use a transparency of the original and delete to recreate this version in front of the class. It is clearer than the original not because of language (word choices) but because it gets to the point quickly. It illustrates the "must know" principle of organization and shows how much brevity contributes to clarity.

The second revision shows how much reader-centered style can help. It includes every point made in the original, so it is not reader-centered in content or organization, but it would "get the job done" in a much more cost-effective way than the original. You can take the original and show how each point has been translated into "plain English".

The third revision is reader-centered in content, organization, and style. Because the writer knows that the reader issues special-use permits regularly and that cancellation rights are a normal part of the permits, he does not specify what the reader already knows.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Scott Ticer, "Business Watch," Dallas Times Herald, Monday, May 31, 1982, p. C - 5, column 1.

[2]Thomas Miller, "Writing in the World of Work," part of the "Research Report of FIPSE Project from the University of Texas at Austin," presented at the North Central Texas Writing Conference, March 6, 1982. This survey was based on a stratified government sample of 200 college graduates working in randomly selected businesses in Austin, Dallas, and Shreveport. Each participant completed a three page questionnaire and was interviewed.

[3]Miller.

[4]Ticer.

[5]Maxine Hairston, "Not All Errors Are Created Equal: Nonacademic Readers in the Professions Respond to Lapses in Usage," College English, 43 (December 1981), p. 798.

[6]One of the first to note the preoccupation of poor writers with correctness and sentence-level planning was Mina Shaughnessy in Errors and Expectations (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977). Several researchers are documenting this constant concern with correctness and concluding it is a hallmark of poor writers. Some of the researchers in this area include James Britton, Ellen Nold, Sondra Perl, Nancy Sommers, and Linda Flower and John R. Hayes.

[7]Hairston, p. 798.

[8]Hairston, pp. 795-796.

[9]The original of the Roland Trespass Memo and this revision appear in Goobledygook Has Gotta Go by John O'Hayre (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, n.d.), p.p. 11-15. The rejection letters (both writer-centered and reader centered) are letters I received in 1976; only the names have been changed. The writer-centered, off-campus memo is made up to show associative organization and wordiness; the reader-centered, off-campus memo is one I wrote and sent to the people listed. Another version of the memo (without the section on Tuesday, March 3rd) was sent to those teaching at Richardson High School whose classes did not meet on Tuesdays.

[10]For an overview of researchers and the methods and subjects they are using, see Joan Pettigrew, "Studies of the Composing Process: A Selective Review," Research in Composition Newsletter, Fall 1981, pp.1-28. Excerpts of

real writing protocols (from both expert and novice writers) appear in many of the articles by Linda Flower and John R. Hayes. Remember, my models of the XYZ President are fictional representations of the major characteristics of expert and novice writers.

[11]Linda Flower and John R. Hayes, "The Cognition of Discovery: Defining a Rhetorical Problem," College Composition and Communication, 31 (February 1980), pp. 27 and 29. This article also deals with the difference in goals between novice and expert writers.

[12]Linda Flower, "Writer-Based Prose: A Cognitive Basis for Problems in Writing," College English, 41 (September 1979), p. 20.

[13]Dixie Goswami et al., Writing in the Professions (Washington, D.C.: American Institutes for Research, 1981), pp. 109-111. This is the source for dividing style guidelines into three categories. For additional information on the scenario principle (readers placing themselves in the text), see Linda Flower, John R. Hayes, and Heidi Swarts, "Reader-Based Revision of Functional Documents: The Scenario Principle," in New Essays in Technical Writing and Communication, ed. P. Anderson, J. Brockman, and C. Miller (Farmingdale, N.Y.: Baywood Publishing Co., 1982).

[14]Dennis Murphy, Better Business Communications (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1957), p. 169.

[15]Goswami et al., p. 125.

[16]Goswami et al., p. 31.

[17]Jack M. Kneece, "Intern's Idea Impacts 'Government Surplus,'" Dallas Morning News, Saturday, August 15, 1981, p. A - 24.

[18]Kneece.

[19]Goswami et al., p. 31.

[20]"Plain Language Laws: An Update" in Simply Stated, the monthly newsletter of the Document Design Center, American Institutes of Research, No. 24 (February-March 1982), p. 3.

[21]Information on the writing curriculum for law students was obtained in an interview with Dr. Janice Redish, Director of the Document Design Center, American Institutes of Research, March 15, 1982.

[22]The original memo and all revisions appear in Gobbledygook Has Gotta Go by John O'Hayre (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, n.d.), pp. 11-15.

Can You Avoid the Errors That Really Bother Executives?

Not all errors are equally serious, and not all errors that bother English teachers bother business people. This exercise provides a way for you to find out if you can identify and correct the errors that really do bother most executives. It was developed as a questionnaire for business people by Dr. Maxine Hairston.[1]

Each item contains one error. If you can spot it, correct it. Sometimes you will need to make more than one change to correct the error. If a sentence seems fine to you, don't worry about it; just go on to the next item.

You will receive points for some of the items you correct. Some items will be worth more points than others because most executives said they were "bothered a lot" by the error. Some items are not worth any points because most business people either were not bothered at all by the error or were only bothered a little.

1. Extra copies will be provided for whoever needs them.
2. Tact not anger is the best tactic in this case.
3. He concentrated on his job he never took vacations.
4. Wellington said, Trains will just cause the lower classes to move about needlessly.
5. The three men talked between themselves and decided not to fire the auditor.
6. Never reveal your weaknesses to others, they will exploit them.
7. Everyone who attends will have to pay their own expenses.
8. Coventry is the most unique city in England.
9. People are always impressed by her smooth manner, elegant clothes, and being witty.
10. Almost everyone dislikes her; they say she is careless and insolent.
11. The state's hiring policies intimidate the applications of ambitious people.
12. The small towns are dying. One of the problems being that young people are leaving.
13. Having argued all morning, a decision was finally reached.
14. If the regulating agency sets down on the job, everyone will suffer.

15. The situation is quite different than that of previous years.

16. A person who knows french and german will get along well in Switzerland.

17. It is late in his term and inflation is worse and no one has a solution.

18. Our companys record is exceptional.

19. The President dismissed four cabinet members among them Joseph Califano.

20. When Mitchell moved, he brung his secretary with him.

21. Three causes of inflation are: easy credit, costly oil, and consumer demand.

22. When a person moves every year, one cannot expect them to develop civic pride.

23. We direct our advertising to the young prosperous and sports-minded reader.

24. The worst situation is when the patient ignores warning symptoms.

25. The army moved my husband and I to California last year.

26. He went through a long battle. A fight against unscrupulous opponents.

27. The lieutenant treated his men bad.

28. Sanford inquired whether the loan was overdue?

29. When the time came to pay the filing fee however the candidate withdrew.

30. The data supports her hypothesis.

31. Those are the employees that were honored.

32. Visitors find it difficult to locate the plant, which affects business.

33. Him and Richards were the last ones hired.

34. There has never been no one here like that woman.

35. These kind of errors would soon bankrupt a company.

36. My favorite quotation is, "Take what you want and pay for it.

37. The reporter paid attention to officers but ignores enlisted men.

38. If I was in charge of that campaign, I would be worried about opinion polls.

39. If Clemens had picked up that option, his family would of been rich.

40. Its wonderful to have Graham back on the job.

41. Calhoun has went after every prize in the university.

42. Next year we expect to send a representative to China (if Peking allows it.

43. Cheap labor and low costs. These are two benefits enjoyed by Taiwan-based firms.

44. The difficult part is if the client refused to cooperate.

45. State employees can't hardly expect a raise this year.

46. The supervisor has no objections to us leaving.

47. Although the candidate is new to politics she has a good chance of winning.

48. A convicted felon no matter how good his record may not serve on a grand jury.

49. I was last employed by texas instruments company.

50. When leaving college, clothes suddenly become a major problem.

51. Enclosed in his personnel file is his discharge papers and job references.

52. The president or the vice-president are going to be at the opening ceremonies.

53. To me, every person is an individual, and they should be treated with respect.

54. Good policemen require three qualities: courage, tolerance, and dedicated.

55. The interruption will not effect my work.

56. I have always hoped to work in that field, now I will have the opportunity.

57. Senator javits comes from new york.

58. I believe that everyone of them are guilty.

59. That is her across the street.

60. Cox cannot predict, that street crime will diminish.

61. When we was in the planning stages of the project, we underestimated costs.

62. The union claims it's rights have been violated.

63. The company is prepared to raise prices. In spite of administrative warnings.

64. Jones don't think it is acceptable.

65. Man is not the only user of tools, apes can also learn to manipulate them.

How Well Have You Done?

Outrageous Errors (errors that bothered almost every business person a lot--56 points possible)

Number of items you corrected _____ X 7 pts. each = _____ points

Very Serious Errors (50 points possible)

Number of items you corrected _____ X 5 pts. each = _____ points

Serious Errors (30 points possible)

Number of items you corrected _____ X 3 pts. each = _____ points

Somewhat Serious Errors (10 points possible)

Number of items you corrected _____ X 1 pt. each = _____ points

Your Total = _____ points

Does your total equal at least 109 (75% of the 146 possible points)?

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[1]This exercise was originally was developed by Dr. Maxine Hairston of the University of Texas at Austin as a 66 item questionnaire to be completed by professional people from 63 different occupations. Her questionnaire and results appeared in her article, "Not All Errors Are Created Equal," in College English, December 1981, pp. 794-806.

GRADING SYSTEM AND ANSWERS FOR "What Errors Bother Executives"

The "grading system" for this exercise is set up so that students receive points for finding and correcting errors. The points vary with seriousness of the error. As a result, the easiest way to "grade" the exercise is to do it orally, discussing errors and letting students correct their own papers and make notes as they do.

To emphasize the different levels of seriousness, the answers appear here by category. Within each category, the items appear in order. The numbers in parentheses that follow each item, indicate how many respondents indicated each category on that item. The first number shows how many marked "does not bother me"; the middle number shows how many marked "bothers me a little"; and the last number shows how many marked "bothers me a lot".

Each item is followed by a brief description of the error and a sample correction or two. Other corrections are possible. What appear here are the simplest or most common corrections. As you complete one category (i.e. outrageous errors), have students turn to the back of the exercise and note how many errors in that group they were able to correct.

OUTRAGEOUS ERRORS (eight items -- each is worth 7 points)

Over 87.5% of those responding were bothered a lot by the items in this group.

20. When Mitchell moved, he brung his secretary with him. (0-1-79)

Problem: Non-standard verb form
Correction: . . . he brought . . .

33. Him and Richards were the last ones hired. (0-1-78)

Problem: Incorrect pronoun case
Correction: He and Richards . . . OR Richards and he

34. There has never been no one here like that woman. (0-1-78)

Problem: Double negative
Correction: There has never been anyone . . .
OR No one like that woman has ever been . . .

41. Calhoun has went after every prize in the university. (1-0-77)

Problem: Incorrect verb form
Correction: Calhoun has gone . . .
OR Calhoun went after . . .

45. State employees can't hardly expect a raise this year. (2-5-70)

Problem: Double negative
Correction: State employees can hardly . . .

Answer Key 1

57. Senator javits comes from new york. (4-6-67)

Problem: Not capitalizing proper nouns
Correction: Senator Javits comes from New York.

61. When we was in the planning stages of the project, we underestimated costs. (2-0-74)

Problem: Subject-verb agreement
Correction: When we were in . . .

64. Jones don't think it is acceptable. (1-4-73)

Problem: Subject-verb agreement
Correction: Jones doesn't think . . .

VERY SERIOUS ERRORS (ten items -- each is worth 5 points)

The items in this group bothered 68 - 81% a lot.

3. He concentrated on his job he never took vacations. (5-13-61)

Problem: Fused or run-together sentences (i.e. two complete sentences side-by-side with no punctuation between)

Corrections: job; he never . . . OR job: he never
OR job. He never OR job, and he never

25. The army moved my husband and I to California last year. (3-21-57)

Problem: Incorrect pronoun case
Correction: . . . moved my husband and me . . .

26. He went through a long battle. A fight against unscrupulous opponents. (10-15-56)

Problem: Sentence fragment or broken sentence

Correction: . . . battle, a fight against unscrupulous opponents.
OR . . . battle. It was a fight against . . .

27. The lieutenant treated his men bad. (1-21-58)

Problem: Incorrect use of adjective
Correction: . . . treated his men badly (OR poorly etc.)

39. If Clemens had picked up that option, his family would of been rich. (7-16-55)

Problem: Non-standard verb form
Correction: . . . family would have been rich.

49. I was last employed by texas instruments company. (3-19-55)

Problem: Not capitalizing proper noun
Correction: . . . by Texas Instruments

51. Enclosed in his personnel file is his discharge papers and job references. (8-17-54)

Problem: Subject-verb agreement (subject follows verb)
Correction: . . . are his discharge papers and job references.

54. Good policemen require three qualities: courage, tolerance, and dedicated. (6-9-64)

Problem: Faulty parallelism (items in list not in same form)
Correction: . . . courage, tolerance, and dedication.

60. Cox cannot predict, that street crime will diminish. (6-13-61)

Problem: Unnecessary comma (separating verb and object)
Correction: Cox cannot predict that street crime will diminish.

63. The company is prepared to raise prices. In spite of administrative warnings. (4-11-64)

Problem: Sentence Fragment or Broken Sentence
Correction: . . . raise prices in spite of . . .
OR . . . raise prices--in spite of . . .

SERIOUS ERRORS (ten items — each is worth 3 points)

About one-half to two-thirds of the respondents (51 - 65%) were bothered a lot by the items in this category.

9. People are always impressed by her smooth manner, elegant clothes, and being witty. (7-27-43)

Problem: Faulty parallelism
Correction: . . . smooth manner, elegant clothes, and wit.

11. The state's hiring policies intimidate the applications of ambitious people. (15-15-46)

Problem: Illogical verb-object combination
Correction: . . . policies intimidate ambitious people.

12. The small towns are dying. One of the problems being that young people are leaving. (7-26-49)

Problem: Sentence fragment
Correction: . . . dying, one of the . . .
OR dying. One of the problems is that young . . .

14. If the regulating agency sets down on the job, everyone will suffer. (14-19-48)

Problem: Incorrect verb choice
Correction: . . . agency sits down on . . .

29. When the time came to pay the filing fee however the candidate withdrew. (7-20-50)

Problem: No commas around interrupter (the first comma serves two purposes--to mark the end of the introduction and the beginning of the interrupter, however)

Correction: . . . the filing fee, however, the candidate withdrew.

35. These kind of errors would soon bankrupt a company. (12-26-40)

Problem: Singular noun following plural pronoun (these)
Correction: These kinds of . . .
OR This kind of error . . .

37. The reporter paid attention to officers but ignores enlisted men. (5-24-46)

Problem: Unnecessary shift in verb tense
Correction: . . . to officers but ignored enlisted men.
OR The reporter pays attention to officers . . .

42. Next year we expect to send a representative to China (if Peking allows it._ (9-23-49)

Problem: Not closing parentheses (i.e. sloppy punctuation)
Correction: . . . to China (if Peking allows it).

44. The difficult part is if the client refused to cooperate. (9-25-43)

Problem: Illogical verb-complement and a tense shift
Correction: The difficult part is when the client refuses . . .

52. The president or the vice-president are going to be at the opening ceremonies. (6-31-42)

Problem: Subject-verb agreement (when or joins two subjects, the verb agrees with the nearest subject)
Correction: The president or the vice-president is going . . .
OR The president and the vice president are going . . .

Additional Note: If the context suggested the President of the United States (or any other country), both president and vice-president would be capitalized.

SOMEWHAT SERIOUS ERRORS (ten items -- each is worth 1 point)

To select items for this category, I applied two criteria. The first criterion was that more than 40% were bothered a lot by the item. (The actual range is 40.5 - 51% bothered a lot.) The second criterion was that no more than fifteen respondents indicated that they were not bothered at all. Essentially, this group represents items by which respondents were bothered but divided between being bothered a lot and a little.

4. Wellington said, _Trains will just cause the lower classes to move about needlessly._ (11-35-33)

Problem: Not punctuating a direct quotation
Correction: Wellington said, "Trains will . . . needlessly."

16. A person who knows french and german will get along well in Switzerland. (12-31-33)

Problem: Not capitalizing proper nouns (names of languges)
Correction: . . . knows French and German will . . .

18. Our companys record is exceptional. (14-25-40)

Problem: Not using apostrophe to form possessive

Correction: Our company's record . . .

19. The President dismissed four cabinet members_ among them Joseph Califano. (5-40-33)

Problem: Not using a comma to set off interrupter at the end of the sentence
Correction: . . . four cabinet members, among them Joseph Califano.

22. When a person moves every year, one cannot expect them to develop civic pride. (10-32-37)

Problem: Pronoun-reference agreement
Correction: . . . expect him to . . . OR . . . expect her to . . .
OR When people move every year, one cannot expect them to . . .

23. We direct our advertising to the young_ prosperous_ and sports-minded reader. (12-32-35)

Problem: Not using commas to separate items in a series
Correction: . . . to the young, prosperous, and . . .
OR . . . to the young, prosperous and sports-minded . . .

32. Visitors find it difficult to locate the plant, which affects business. (9-34-36)

Problem: Misplaced modifier
Correction: The fact that visitors find it difficult to locate the plant affects business.
OR Because visitors find it difficult to locate the plant, business is affected.

53. To me, every person is an individual, and they should be treated with respect. (14-31-34)

Problem: Pronoun-reference agreement
Correction: To me, every person is an individual who should be treated with respect.
OR To me, people are individuals and they should be treated with respect.

58. I believe that every one of them are guilty. (15-32-32)

Problem: Subject-verb agreement
Correction: . . . every one of them is guilty.

59. That is her across the street. (13-31-36)

Problem: Incorrect pronoun case
Correction: That is she across the street.

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[1]This exercise was originally was developed by Dr. Maxine Hairston of the University of Texas at Austin as a 66 item questionnaire to be completed by professional people from 63 different occupations. I have omitted item number eight from her original (because she discarded the results) and renumbered. Her questionnaire and results appeared in her article, "Not All Errors Are Created Equal," in College English, December 1981, pp. 794-806. College English grants permission to use and reproduce material for educational uses. The number of copies should not exceed 100.

BUSINESS WRITING: Summary Sheet

Writing is a form of one-way communication that most people worry about. Why? Most of us have been criticized for our writing—if not by teachers, then by friends or bosses. The idea that we are accountable for what we write, that words and sentences can be pointed at and labeled "wrong", makes us a bit reluctant to put pen to paper.

As a result, many people act as if "the best defense is a strong offense." When asked about their writing, they say, "Well, I'm not a writer and I don't pretend to be. I'm an accountant [or engineer or secretary or manager]." Essentially they are hiding behind the myth that writers are born, not made. And they expect their announcement to have a "Case closed!" effect. Many are shocked when their bosses persist in expecting them to produce memos, reports, and letters that get the job done.

A Few Suggestions For Improving Your Writing

1. Think carefully about
   * who your audience is
   * what your purpose is
   * how the task should be accomplished

2. Concentrate on what your readers need to know

As a student, your task is to let the instructor see how much information you have. The focus is on what you know and how you have come to know it (your thought processes, research methods, etc.). In other words, to be a successful student, you must reveal as much information as possible. In contrast, job-related writing focuses on what the reader actually needs to know. To be an effective business writer, you must learn to select only the information the reader will need to act.

3. Write simply and directly

Your purpose is to communicate information or motivate the reader to act, not to impress the reader. Clarity is the key, not eloquence and sophistication.

* Talk to your readers—when possible, address them by name or by using pronouns like you, me, and us

* Substitute simple words for jargon and forget about trying to make your writing "sound good"

  Don't write: "It is the intention of this task force to implement an evaluation system for the . . ."
  Instead, write: "We plan to evaluate . . ." OR
  "This task force plans to evaluate . . ." OR
  "We will design a new system . . ."

* Use short, easy-to-follow sentences (try to average 12-18 words)

4. Help your readers find the important information

* Put the most important information first in a letter or memo, so readers can see quickly what they must know

* Use informative headings

* Become familiar with the formats your company prefers and follow them carefully

5. Ask others to comment on your drafts, but be specific about what you want know

For feedback on content and order, ask questions like these:

What do you think my main concern is?
What do you think I want the reader to do?
What, if anything, confuses you?

For feedback on style (clarity and tone), ask questions like these:

Did you have to reread any sentences?
What section was the easiest to read?
What do you think my attitude is toward the receiver?

For feedback on correctness, ask questions like these:

Would you circle any misspelled words you see?
Would you check my punctuation?
Would you underline any sentences that strike you as awkward?

Remember, poor business writing can cost a company money in many ways. Poor writing can lead to wasted time, misunderstandings, a bad public image, and even direct loss of business. That's why companies want employees to be reasonably effective writers—people who can produce memos, letters, and reports that get the job done in a cost effective manner. Employers also expect good business writing to be basically correct—free of spelling errors, formatted according to company guidelines, and free of the more serious grammar, punctuation, and usage errors.

Where Can I Learn More About Writing?

In writing courses like DW 090, DW 091, DW 092 (designed to be taken with Eng 101) and Eng 101, you can study grammar, punctuation, and usage. For work on spelling, you can enroll in a section of DR 090 designated as a spelling improvement course. You can also study any of these areas by enrolling in CLS 100, a supervised independent study course.

For basic information on letters, memos, and reports, enroll in Com 131 or Com 132. For more advanced work and an in-depth study of report writing, enroll in technical writing (Eng 210).

WRITING: Application

For this assignment, you will be writing two memos on the same topic. Your instructor may assign you a specific topic or may let you choose any one of the these:

Topic #1: Write a memo to your supervisor describing a change that you would like to see made in company policy or procedure.

Topic #2: Write a memo to your co-op instructor describing a change that you would like to see made in your seminar course. The change may deal with topics discussed, in-class activities, assignments, et cetera.

Topic #3: OTHER (This may be a specific topic your instructor assigns or, if your instructor permits, it may be any topic you choose. In either case, write the topic here.)

_____

_____

_____

PART A: Using your assigned topic, write a memo that is as writer-centered as possible. First focus on making the content and organization writer-centered. If you can also make the style writer-centered, that is fine; if not, don't worry about it.

PART B: Now, using the same assigned topic, write a memo that is as reader-centered as possible.

PART C: Make a clean copy of each memo to take to your next class meeting. Both memos should be basically correct in all three ways: (1) free of spelling errors; (2) formatted according to your company's guidelines; and (3) free of the more serious errors in grammar, punctuation, and usage.

PART D: When you have finished preparing your memos, answer these three questions.

1. Which memo was easier for you to write? What about it was especially easy for you?

OVER

2. Describe what was most difficult about writing the other memo.

3. What aspect of writing do you think you most need to focus on in order to improve your job-related writing?

PART E: Have two classmates read your memos. Ask each to tell you which is the better memo and why. Make notes of what each says. Neither classmate should know which the other selected or why.

First classmate's selection and reasons:

Second classmate's selection and reasons:

Did either classmate say anything that would suggest you need to focus on something different from what you indicated in D.3 above? If so, what?

INFORMATION ON COVER LETTER AND RESPONDENTS

This excerpt explains why and how Dr. Harrison asked respondents to complete the questionnaire:

As far as I know, no one has ever tried to find out how laymen respond to errors in usage, so I decided I would take a poll. I constructed a questionnaire of sixty-five sentences, fewer than I would have like to use, but as many as I thought my readers would be willing to read and respond to. I included one error in standard English usage in each sentence, and after each sentence I listed three choices: Does not bother me; Bothers me a little; Bothers me a lot. At the end I added an open-ended question: What is the most annoying feature of the writing that comes across your desk?

To accompany the questionnaire I drafted a carefully phrased letter explaining that I wanted to know what kinds of grammatical errors mattered most in the world of working writing. I gave these guidelines for responding:

> What I would like you to do is read through each sentence rather quickly and mark your response to it. That is, if you encountered the sentence in a report or business letter, would it lower your estimate of the writer, and how much? I do not want to know if you would write it as it appears in the questionnaire, but only if finding the sentence in someone else's writing would bother you.

In the third paragraph I tried to counteract the intimidating effects of taking a quiz from an English professor with these words:

> I hope you will be able to respond to these sentences candidly without thinking that a judgmental English professor is looking over your shoulder. I know that English teachers make most people self-conscious about their grammer, but I hope you can set aside that reaction this time and respond to these sentences as naturally and realistically as you would if they occurred in a routine document that you might read in your work. Getting your honest opinion is important to me so that I can make my textbook helpful for both students and teachers.

I had the letters professionally typed and copied, then had a typist fill in the address and salutation for each letter so that they looked individually done; I used first name salutations for people I knew. I numbered the questionnaires in order to identify the responders, and I enclosed a self-addressed and stamped envelope with each one.

I sent the questionnaire to 101 professional people; I included no English teachers. I knew at least slightly eighty-five percent of the people on the list, and I picked the others from among well-known local people. The age of about three-fourths of the people in the sample was over forty; most of them were between fifty and sixty. Three-fourths of them were also men, simply because I know more professional men than women.

OVER

OCCUPATIONS OF PROFESSIONALS RESPONDING TO USAGE SURVEY

Business executives
Attorneys
Peridontíst
State legislator
Insurance adjuster
Hospital group executive
State educational officer
Federal judge
State educational consultant
Radio station owner
Insurance attorney
Accountant
Realtors
Oil company chairman
Speech professor
Physician
State educational commissioner
School superintendent
State senator
Public school attorney
Associate dean of nursing
Lecturer, free lance writer
Oil company president
Lobbyist
University vice president
Newspaper columnist
Radio news commentator
Legislative aide
Associate dean of law school
Business consultant
Bank president
Talent agency executive
Anatomy professor
Architect
Travel agency owner
Editor
Dean of continuing education
Nursing professor
State auditor
Free lance writer
Dean of law school
State consultant on arts
Engineer
Designer of computer programs
Insurance executive
Newspaper editor
College president
Chemical engineer
U.S. Congressman
County commissioner
County commissioner's aide
Social workers
Astronomy professor
Public relations executive
Investment counselor
Stock broker
District judge
State administrative aide
Naval officer
Law professor
Tax analyst
Management consultant
Chamber of Commerce director

SAMPLE CORRECTIONS FOR ALL ITEMS

1. Extra copies will be provided for ~~whoever~~ whomever needs them.
2. Tact, not anger, is the best tactic in this case.
3. He concentrated on his job. He never took vacations.
4. Wellington said, "Trains will just cause the lower classes to move about needlessly."
5. The three men talked ~~between~~ among themselves and decided not to fire the auditor.
6. Never reveal your weaknesses to others; they will exploit them.
7. Everyone who attends will have to pay ~~their~~ his own expenses. (or her own...)
8. Coventry is ~~the most~~ a unique city in England.
9. People are always impressed by her smooth manner, elegant clothes, and ~~being witty~~ wit.
10. ~~Almost everyone dislikes~~ Most people dislike her; they say she is careless and insolent.
11. The state's hiring policies intimidate ~~the applications of~~ ambitious people.
12. The small towns are dying, ~~One~~ one of the problems being that young people are leaving.
13. Having argued all morning, ~~a decision was~~ the managers finally reached a decision.
14. If the regulating agency ~~sets~~ sits down on the job, everyone will suffer.
15. The situation is quite different ~~than~~ from that of previous years.
16. A person who knows ~~french~~ French and ~~german~~ German will get along well in Switzerland.
17. ~~It~~ Although it is late in his term and inflation is worse, ~~and~~ no one has a solution. (problem is short, choppy sentences strung together with and)
18. Our company's record is exceptional.
19. The President dismissed four cabinet members, among them Joseph Califano.
20. When Mitchell moved, he ~~brung~~ brought his secretary with him.
21. Three causes of inflation are: easy credit, costly oil, and consumer demand. (no colon)
22. When ~~a person moves~~ people move every year, one cannot expect them to develop civic pride.
23. We direct our advertising to the young, prosperous, and sports-minded reader.
24. The worst situation ~~is~~ develops when the patient ~~ignores~~ has ignored warning symptoms. (illogical comparison)
25. The army moved my husband and ~~I~~ me to California last year.
26. He went through a long battle, a fight against unscrupulous opponents.
27. The lieutenant treated his men ~~bad~~ badly.
28. Sanford inquired whether the loan was overdue.
29. When the time came to pay the filing fee, however, the candidate withdrew.
30. The data ~~supports~~ support her hypothesis.

31. Those are the employees ~~that~~ who were honored.
32. ~~Visitors~~ The face that visitors find it difficult to locate the plant, ~~which~~ affects business.
33. ~~Him~~ Me and Richards were the last ones hired.
34. There has never been ~~no one~~ anyone here like that woman.
35. These ~~kind~~ kinds of errors would soon bankrupt a company.
36. My favorite quotation is, "Take what you want and pay for it." (")
37. The reporter paid attention to officers but ~~ignores~~ ignored enlisted men.
38. If I ~~was~~ were in charge of that campaign, I would be worried about opinion polls.
39. If Clemens had picked up that option, his family would ~~of~~ have been rich.
40. ~~Its~~ It's wonderful to have Graham back on the job.
41. Calhoun has ~~went~~ gone after every prize in the university.
42. Next year we expect to send a representative to China (if Peking allows it).
43. Cheap labor and low costs. ~~These~~ are two benefits enjoyed by Taiwan-based firms. (one sentence)
44. The difficult part is if the client ~~refused~~ refuses to cooperate.
45. State employees ~~can't~~ can hardly expect a raise this year.
46. The supervisor has no objections to ~~us~~ our leaving.
47. Although the candidate is new to politics, she has a good chance of winning.
48. A convicted felon, no matter how good his record, may not serve on a grand jury.
49. I was last employed by ~~texas instruments~~ Texas Instruments company.
50. When ~~leaving~~ I left college, clothes suddenly became a major problem.
51. Enclosed in his personnel file ~~is~~ are his discharge papers and job references.
52. The president or the vice-president ~~are~~ is going to be at the opening ceremonies.
53. To me, every person is an individual, ~~and they~~ who should be treated with respect.
54. Good policemen require three qualities: courage, tolerance, and ~~dedicated~~ dedication.
55. The interruption will not ~~effect~~ affect my work.
56. I have always hoped to work in that field; now I will have the opportunity.
57. Senator ~~Javits~~ Javits comes from ~~new york~~ New York.
58. I believe that everyone of them ~~are~~ is guilty.
59. That is ~~her~~ she across the street.
60. Cox cannot predict that street crime will diminish.
61. When we ~~was~~ were in the planning stages of the project, we underestimated costs.
62. The union claims ~~its~~ its rights have been violated.
63. The company is prepared to raise prices, ~~In~~ in spite of administrative warnings.
64. Jones ~~don't~~ doesn't think it is acceptable.
65. Man is not the only user of tools; apes can also learn to manipulate them.

ERIC Clearinghouse for Junior Colleges
8118 Math-Sciences Building
APR 13 1983